

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

HERSCHEL PARK (FORMERLY UPTON PARK)

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HERSCHEL PARK (FORMERLY UPTON PARK)

Name: HERSCHEL PARK (FORMERLY UPTON PARK)

District: Slough (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.503082
Longitude: -0.59502345
National Grid Reference: SU 97614 79174
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001648
Date first listed: 18-Oct-2002

Details

A mid C19 park, possibly designed by Joseph Paxton, laid out in informal style as the centrepiece of an associated private residential development, becoming a public park in 1949.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

When, in June 1838, the Great Western Railway was opened between London and Maidenhead, Slough was the first point which provided convenient access to Windsor and Eton. A station was not built however until 1840 and for the first two years of the railway's operation trains stopped at Slough without the benefit of station or platform (Hunter et al 1980). Queen Victoria and Prince Albert and their retinue regularly used Slough station and the Windsor Road leading southwards to reach Windsor Castle until a station was built in Windsor itself in 1842 (ibid). The coming of the railway led to the development of the village into a small market town, and in particular of a select residential development called Upton Park which lay directly to the east of Windsor Road.

The Windsor and Eton Express of 9 July 1842 carried an advertisement inviting 'Capitalists, spirited Builders, and any one desirous of securing a Site for a Residence, to apply for land described as, 'The Site for a New Town, Villas, etc, at the Grand Railway Station at Slough', and stating that 'plans are preparing'. In September 1842 a Windsor builder, Mr Bedborough, bought 'that fine tract of land running from Arbur [sic] Hill, on the Eton and Slough turnpike road, to near Upton Old Church, [intending] to avail himself of the peculiar advantages of the situation, by erecting about fifty handsome villa residences, encircled by and interspersed with ornamental grounds and roads, to be called Victoria Park: through which it is proposed to carry a road leading direct from Thames-street, across a new bridge over the Thames, to the Railway Station at Slough' (Windsor Express, September 1842).

The designer Joseph Paxton (1803-65) may have provided a layout for the estate and park which the development encircled (Sale particulars 1887; Bentley 1892; Chadwick 1961; Hunter 1996), illustrated in two mid C19 engravings (Chadwick 1961; Bucks RO). Twenty-nine houses and three lodges were built and the park was laid out in 1843. Victoria Terrace was begun in May 1843 and was followed by the three lodges, and West and East Villas, together with a detached residence in its own grounds, Spring Cottage. The architect was Benjamin Baud, who was at that time involved with the alterations under Wyattville at Windsor Castle, and may have been involved with Paxton via the recommendation of Wyattville who had worked at Chatsworth

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House, Derbyshire (qv) where Paxton was Head Gardener. Baud was also connected with the Brompton Cemetery Company (qv Brompton Cemetery), by which he was dismissed in 1844 (Pevsner and Williamson 1994).

A plan drawn for Alfred Bedborough in 1867 shows the houses completed and those proposed, clearly distinguishing between them. Sale plans of 1880 and 1887 show the full extent of the 32 acre (c 13ha) development and the layout of the central park. These show that the development was never fully achieved, and that a significant proportion of the land was not developed at that time. The 1887 sale particulars mention that the park was laid out by Paxton. The unused plots were largely developed with detached residences during the C20.

The park was acquired by Slough Council in 1949 (Hunter 2003), and opened to the public. It was renamed Herschel Park in honour of the Hanoverian astronomer Sir William Herschel (1738-1822) who lived nearby from 1786 until his death. The site continues (2002) in use as a public park.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Herschel Park lies in the southern suburbs of Slough, in the parish of Upton, c 1km south of the town centre and railway station. The park, situated on land which slopes gently down from north to south, is the focal element of what began as a 13ha residential development built over some twenty years from the 1840s. Of this 13ha it appears that only c 9ha was actually developed in the C19. The 3.5ha, roughly rectangular park lies at the south boundary of this development. It is bounded to the west by an estate road, the west side of which is occupied by West Villas, to the north by the houses and former gardens of Victoria Terrace, to the east by an estate road leading to Spring Cottage set in its own grounds, and on the east side of this road by East Villas and The Mere. To the south the site is bounded by a small stream, screened from the park by a mixed tree and shrub belt. Beyond this is the site of former low-lying agricultural wetlands, now (2002) occupied by a large landfill mound dividing the park from the M4 motorway. Some 3ha of this area are now part of the park and are known as the Herschel Park Extension (outside the area here registered). It appears that originally it was not the intention that the park be enclosed by railings or a wall, rather, it was to be freely accessible from the surrounding houses (mid C19 engraving, in Chadwick 1961). The evidence of the late C19 OS maps (1875, 1899) however appears to show that the park was enclosed by this time.

The setting is genteelly suburban, with the houses of West and East Villas and Victoria Terrace overlooking the park. The westernmost of the three blocks making up Victoria Terrace was demolished in the mid C20 and has been replaced by smaller domestic housing. Before the landfill mound, now the Herschel Park Extension, was constructed, long views appear to have extended from the surrounding housing of Upton Park, and possibly from the park itself, southwards towards Windsor Castle and Eton College.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The park is entered from three main points giving access from the surrounding residential estate. The south-west entrance is approached off Windsor Road, 200m to the west-north-west, which originally formed the west boundary of the estate. A lodge (1840s, now gone) formerly stood at the junction with the road. From here an estate road leads east-south-east past a row of terraced cottages (late C19) to the south-west corner of the park. The north-west entrance is approached from the junction of Windsor Road with Albert Street which originally formed the northern boundary of the estate. At this junction, c 220m north-west of the park, formerly stood a lodge (1840s, now gone) and from here an estate road flanked by lime trees leads south-east down a gentle slope between West Villas and Victoria Terrace to the north-west entrance to the park. A further estate road enters off Albert Street, 170m north of the north-west entrance to the park. At this point stands a single-storey brick-built lodge, divided into two cottages known as 'Pro Tem' and Diana Lodge (1840s). This building originally housed a lodgekeeper/caretaker as well as the former Upton Park Billiards Club (Sale plans 1880, 1887) and incorporates a plaque with classical figures on its east side (as part of Pro Tem). From here the drive extends south to join the north-west drive at the west end of Victoria Terrace. The third, north-east entrance to the park is approached off Albert Street to the north via an estate road which curves c 120m south to the north-east corner of the park, between an avenue leading to Victoria Terrace and East Villas. From the north-east entrance to the park the estate road continues south-east to give access to Spring Cottage, set in its own grounds just beyond the south-east corner of the park. This road also gives access to the late C19 detached, half-timbered villa, The Mere (1887, possibly George Devey, then Williams, West and Slade), set in its own grounds

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beyond the eastern edge of the estate development, to the east of the park (outside the area here registered). The Mere was built for George Bentley and his son Richard and is now occupied by the National Foundation for Educational Research (2002); its grounds have been developed for offices and car parking but the garden boundary is still encircled by mature trees.

The estate road system (outside the area here registered) was laid out in the 1840s as part of the overall design. A southern estate road was planned for the southern boundary of the park, but as the adjacent plots were never developed apart from for Spring Cottage, this became instead a path along the southern boundary of the park (Sale plans 1880, 1887).

PARK Herschel Park is of compact, informal design, laid largely to lawns and planted with scattered specimen trees in variety. Some of the trees may be of the original 1840s planting, amongst which are several varieties of oak, including Lucombe, holm, Turkey, and cork. The site is enclosed by a perimeter belt of trees and laid out with an informal network of paths, some of which in the eastern half have been grassed over.

From the north-west entrance a path leads south-east alongside the northern boundary with the former gardens of Victoria Terrace which lie at a higher level (outside the area here registered). The formerly long, narrow gardens to each villa have largely been thrown into one, with several late C20 blocks of apartments built within them and the rest laid largely to car parking. The gardens still contain many mature trees of various coniferous and deciduous species however and the houses and former gardens overlook the park below. The northern park boundary path leads to the north-east entrance, with a spur half way along, now grassed over, leading south into the centre of the park. Formerly a further serpentine path led south-west from the north-east entrance, joining the central spur path, but this is not now (2002) visible.

From the north-west and south-west entrances a network of paths encircles the basins of two informal lakes at the south-west corner of the park. The path from the south-west entrance leads north-east across a late C20 bridge dividing the two lakes. The bridge replaces an earlier brick bridge, shown in a mid C19 engraving (Chadwick 1961). The lakes are both now (2002) dry, but the southern, larger lake contains an island planted with mature trees.

The Upton Park development, including Herschel Park, closely resembles Paxton's similar development at Prince's Park, Liverpool (qv). Both combine an informally laid out central recreational and ornamental space overlooked by a select private residential development, although Upton Park was at a significantly smaller scale than the Merseyside example. Upton Park also closely resembles a plan published by Paxton dated July 1831 for a communal pleasure ground at the centre of a group of subscription gardens (Horticultural Register).

REFERENCES

Horticultural Register, 1 (1831), pp 58-61 Windsor and Eton Express, 9 July 1842 Windsor Express, 12 November 1842 R Bentley, Some Stray Notes upon Slough and Upton (1892) G F Chadwick, The Works of Sir Joseph Paxton 1803-1865 (1961), pp 48-9, 58, 260 M Fraser, The History of Slough (1973), pp 144-5, 150 J Hunter et al, A Town in the Making: Slough 1851 (1980), p 141 The Mere: A Brief History, guidebook, (National Foundation for Educational Research 1987) N Pevsner and E Williamson, The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire (2nd edn 1994), pp 641-2 J Hunter, A History of Herschel Park, (unpublished MS c 1996) [copy on EH file] J Hunter, A History of Upton Park and Herschel Park, Slough, Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society Paper no 3 (2003)

Maps Plan of Valuable Building Land, Upton Park, Prepared by Alfred Bedborough, 1867 (SC5), (Berkshire Record Office) OS 6" to 1 mile: 3rd edition revised 1910, published 1913 1926 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1875, published 1880 2nd edition revised 1897, published 1899 1938 edition

Illustrations Lithograph, Bird's-eye view of Upton Park situated between the Great Western Railway Station at Slough and Eton College near Windsor, C19 (D67/11), (Berkshire Record Office)

Archival items Documents relating to the Upton Park Estate are held at the Buckinghamshire Record Office (D67/1-11). These include title deeds, plans and other items relating to land ownership, especially: Sale particulars and plans of 1880 and 1887 (D67/8).

Description written: October 2002 Amended: November 2002 Register Inspector: SR Edited: June 2004

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Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.